

Lincoln u3a Magazine August 2026

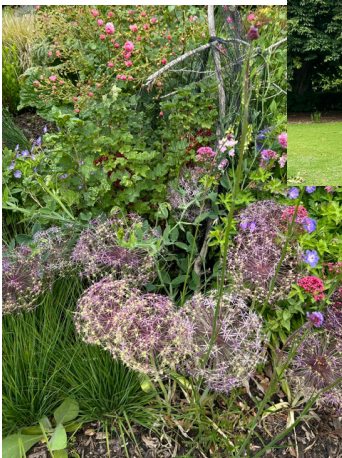
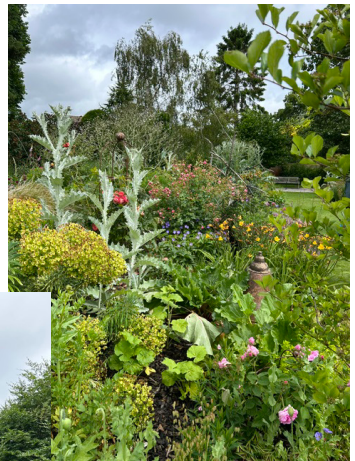


News and Announcements

Lincoln.u3asite.uk

Friday Gardens Group Visit Friday, 12 June 2026

On the 12th June the garden group made a visit to The Poplars, Cotham Lane, Newark. We had a break in the weather on that day from the rain earlier in the week. We thoroughly enjoyed looking round this lovely garden which had been extended from our visit two years earlier. Ian and Michael made us most welcome and escorted around the garden answering any questions we had. They have very distinct areas with grasses, roses, herbaceous perennials and areas specifically to attract bees and butterflies. A few photos show this. They also have a NGS open day on Sunday, 9 August 26 which they are happy for me to mention. I would recommend a visit.



Officers and Committee Members 2026/7

Chair	Jim Innes	jim.innes21@gmail.com
Vice Chair	Sue Firth	suefirthhr@aol.com
Secretary	Sally Graves	graves_sally@yahoo.co.uk
Treasurer	Mary York	maryyork880@gmail.com
Membership Secretary	John Wilson	jwtransmit@gmail.com
Groups Coordinator	Sarah Hawley	sarah.hawley@live.co.uk
Social Secretary	Andy Briggs	briggsandrew272@gmail.com
Welfare Officer	Anita Innes	anita.innes@outlook.com
Committee Member	John White	jonellie51@gmail.com
Webmaster	Sue Firth	suefirthhr@aol.com
Refreshment Hostess	Linda Ash	linda.ash103@gmail.com
Newsletter Distributor	Mary York	maryyork880@gmail.com
Speaker Finder	Mary York	maryyork880@gmail.com
Magazine Editor	Andi Bradley	andrewbradley@railmags.org

Front Cover photo:

These appear to be juvenile Eurasian Blue Tits (*Cyanistes caeruleus*), probably recently fledged youngsters.

Here's what gives them away:

Blue wings and tail are already developing, though not as vibrant as the adults.

Yellow underparts are characteristic of Blue Tits.

The greenish back and bluish wing panel fit well.

They have the slightly "fluffy" appearance and short tails typical of fledglings.

The dark eye stripe is present, but the bright blue cap of the adult hasn't fully developed yet.

Young Blue Tits look softer and duller than the adults:

The blue crown is initially more greenish-grey and the facial markings are less crisp.

They often perch close together after leaving the nest, just as these two are doing, while waiting for their parents to bring food.

Picture submitted by Vera Holmes.

Chairman's Notes: August 2026

Membership.

At time of writing and with the deadline for renewals now well behind us, our membership stands at 273. Our continued year on year growth in membership provides new opportunities for interest groups and for volunteers to help assist with the running of Lincoln u3a.

Can I extend a very warm welcome to all our new members, you are vital to the future success of our organisation, and I am always available to listen to any new ideas that you may have to further enrich our group.



Scam e-mails.

Be aware that we frequently have scam e-mails purporting to come from one of our committee members but that are trying to entice you into divulging personal information and/or looking to extract money from you in an ever increasing number of ways.

To help to identify that an e-mail you receive is actually from Lincoln u3a and has been sent via Beacon, it will contain the following sentence "This email was sent by Beacon on behalf of".

Committee.

At time of writing, we have all Committee roles filled for the coming year. However, we would still like someone to take on the role of Speaker Finder. This would allow Mary York to focus on her Treasurer role and the further implementation of the finance modules of Beacon. A new Committee role of Publicity Officer is also being considered.

We would also like to hear from any members who would like to be considered for any Committee role either now or in the future.

Regular monthly meetings.

A reminder that all our regular monthly meetings commence at 10:15am with doors open from 9:30am. The cost of entry is now £2 which helps to cover the speaker fee, hall hire fee and refreshments. Details of all remaining monthly meetings and speakers for 2026, are on the website.

Coming up in the next three months we have:

- August 4th - Judith Hedley - Tea with Mr Darcy.
- September 1st - Rosanna McGlone - Fieisty Females
- October 6th - Sing it Loud choir.

Full and updated details are on the website.

Generic Lincoln u3a leaflet.

A new A5 fold over leaflet has been designed and is now available to view or download from the website. This is aimed at anyone who wants to know what Lincoln u3a has to offer and will hopefully aid the ongoing membership recruitment campaign. We aim to distribute this leaflet to local libraries and other relevant support groups in the Lincoln area. If any current member would like some of these leaflets to distribute locally, please contact any Committee member. Copies will also be available at every monthly meeting at the Memorial Hall.

Jim Innes

HEATWAVE?

Now I know that the "Wave" part means wave Bye Bye to your garden plants!

The annuals bed flowers (foreground) had been showing great promise, all raised in situ from a "shake it" box of mixed seeds. They flowered well, and provided lots of variety and colour. But look at it now ... many shades of brown, and some plants gone altogether.

The far bed is perennials and fruit. This has fared a little better, as this is their second season, and they have had time to establish good roots, to seek out deeper sources of water. But even there, the sun and lack of rain has devastated some plants, like the oriental poppy you can see, clearly distressed and struggling to make seed.

Ah well. More work for next season, or for when the rains return.

John Wilson



Speakers at Monthly Meetings 2026/27

4 August 26	Judith Hedley	'Teas with Mr Darcy'
1 September 26	Rosanna McGlone	'History of Feisty Females'
6 October 26	'Sing it Loud'	A Choir
3 November 26	David Harrison	'Wines for Christmas' with a 'Best Value' selection, a 'Budget Choice' and a 'Push the Boat Out Set'. All available locally.
1 December 26	The Ukelele Band	Christmas Carols, songs and merriment.
February 27	Nigel and Teri	
April 27	Jenny Evans	
May 27	Bransby Horses	
Further speakers will be added as and when they are booked to appear. Some Speakers are already booked for 2027, but other suggestions are always welcome.		

Hablamos Espanol - Spanish Conversation Group

The Spanish Conversation Group meets every Thursday of the month at 2pm-4pm. A more advanced group will meet once a month for a coffee and Spanish Conversation. We haven't arranged a definite day of the month for this yet.

Contact the Group Leader via the website or at any Monthly Meeting.
Looking forward to hearing from you!

Table Tennis

Table Tennis for All group is seeking new members.

We've decided to increase the maximum number of participants for the above group, and are seeking new members. We meet on the first and third Fridays of each month (and fifth Friday when there is one) from 10am-11am at Ruston's Sports Centre, Newark Road. You are equally welcome whether you are an experienced player or are new to the game. The group is suitable for anyone who wants to play in a relaxed and not too competitive setting. If you're interested please contact Maria North.

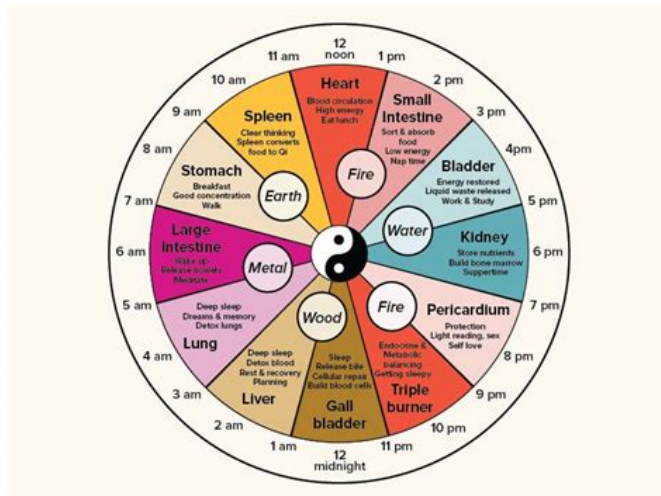
When the Fire element is out of Control.....

I was brought up in a cricket mad household – I even remember having a phone conversation with my Dad from the top of the Malvern Hills at an exciting moment in the 2005 Ashes series, so I am familiar with the term “rain stopped play”. Less so with the concept of being “sunned off”, but this has been the fate of our qi gong sessions. Heat wave #1 we had cancelled as I was doing Qi Gong in Wales, but in #2 we were forced to postpone and rearrange our extra session for July 24th July – to which, once again everyone is welcome. As #3 approached, I decided to adapt what we did and so the folk who were able to attend learned some Japanese style stretches.

Unlike other stretching exercises, the Makko Ho Movements are designed to stimulate the organs and their associated meridians (your energy channels). When these pathways become blocked you feel it as pain and ill health. They are a great way of keeping your body in balance and I have adapted the original movements to make them accessible to all – I did caution the group that if they researched what we were going to do they were not to panic....Masunaga was a very flexible man!!

The Makko Ho were invented by Shizuto Masunaga a Japanese psychologist and the founder of Zen Shiatsu. He recognised the importance of treating the body gently as ailments are so closely linked to emotions. The Makko Ho are a combination of stretching, visualisation and breathwork. Take your time in each pose – 3-5 minutes slowly; doing it until you feel that it is beneficial. Listen to your muscles and how your body reacts; notice whether they are pleasant or not?

When done in a sequence they creates an overall effect of well-being, calmness and energy at the same time. If you are in a weakened state go cautiously and these exercises will rejuvenate you.



As some of you know I am Co-Chair of SSUK and was recently persuaded to record a Conscious Conversation about my shiatsu journey. I had to be leant on (!) but having done it, if anyone is interested in my story – or any of the fab information on our website, here is the link

<https://www.shiatusociety.org/>

Barbara Bond

February in the Fen

A spiral of grey geese
In prehistoric chorus
Shimmer through smoke clouds
Gliding over tracks of glass
Land on scented dreadlocks
Glossy and black

Lapwings pulsate the twilight
Sweeping in overhead flight
Surf the air on tassel wings
Their weird shrieks piercing
Stitch green and piebald feathers
Into crested furrows

Trees shoot out embryo fingers
A wailing wind rattles branches
Robin warbles his fieriest
From an ardent breast
Flickering down the lane
Stalked by a misty moon

The north gale blows
Whistles around this house
Tugging the window panes
Buffeting fields of ragged crows
Coiling a tail, it tries
To lift the sycamore tree

The silent fen in a hoar frost casket
Hawthorn blood-red, crystal droplets
Tender stems stir in the dark
Sap rising, they reach
White hooded snowdrops, quivering
Summon the spring

Diane Bailey
Creative Writing Group



Tuesday Trotters

Tuesday Trotters walking near Wragby
on a very hot day on 23 June 26.

Our numbers were severely depleted
due to the weather!

See page 14 for the walking timetable.

SHEEPWASH COMMUNITY TRIPS
SATURDAY 5TH SEPTEMBER 2026
SCARBOROUGH DAY TRIP
with theatre option
The Trial of Romeo Oscar

A new play written and directed by Alan Ayckbourn. In the year 2194, humanity is scattered around the solar system and day-to-day life on earth looks very different. Preparations are underway for a landmark legal case.

Romeo Oscar, a military issue android, is on trial for murder: the first non-human to be tried in a court of law. The circumstances surrounding the incident are unclear, the evidence is polarising and selecting an impartial jury is proving a challenge.

Alan Ayckbourn's latest play is a courtroom drama exploring a question that artists have been pursuing for centuries - what makes us human?

PROGRAMME

(Parking available by kind permission of Branston Community Academy)

Depart Branston Community Academy	7.45am
(Lincoln pick up by arrangement)	
Arrive Scarborough	10.40am
Performance (Stephen Joseph Theatre)	2.30pm
Depart Scarborough	5.45pm
Arrive Branston Community Academy	8.40pm

(Please note that no breaks en route are planned, there will be a toilet on the coach for emergencies)

COST

Coach only	£21
Coach and Theatre ticket	£43

BOOKING

Please send **THE FULL AMOUNT** (stating number of coach and/or theatre seats required) to **Jacqui and Steve Spalding, Sheepwash Trips, 62 Washingborough Road, Heighington, Lincoln, LN4 1QR** or (Mob 07849 520247)

(If we are unavailable please leave a text message)

Cheques should be made payable to SHEEPWASH TRIPS

Please enclose Stamped Addressed for booking confirmation or further details

Changes to making contact with Lincoln u3a

During a recent Convenors / Group Leaders meeting, concern was expressed that Leaders were receiving phone calls out of the blue about Lincoln u3a and their Group. These calls were often at inconvenient times, or were off topic. Discussion led to the belief that the provision of Leaders phone numbers on the website, and in the Magazine, were responsible for this and so we have removed them.

It is acknowledged that this makes contact with Lincoln u3a more difficult, but there are still ways in which this can be done:

- The website has a "Contacts" section, where an enquirer can click on a role title and send an email. This does not reveal the email or phone details of the person being contacted, but does route the email directly to them. For example, click on the "Groups Coordinator" button and a pro forma email layout is provided, which will be sent directly to Sarah Hawley;
- If you are not web-savvy, all of the Committee are listed at the front of the Magazine, with an email address, and the enquirer can send an email directly to the most appropriate Committee member;
- If you are not sure who to address your query to, just send an email to **lincolnu3a@gmail.com** This is monitored by two of our committee members, and they will route your enquiry on to the correct person.

We trust that you will understand why this has been done. Thank you.

John Wilson, Membership Secretary

New Groups!?

As we all know, groups are the life blood of any U3a. They need to grow and prosper to keep any area lively and fully operational. Let's face it, it's the reason we all joined in the first place-to have fun and make new friends within the groups we choose to join.

Eleven years ago there were more groups than we have today.

To name a few there were:-

Armchair travel, Current affairs, Bridge, Discussion, Family History, German Conversation, History, Keep Fit, Music, Needlecraft, Play reading, Singing, Tai Chi, and Yoga.

As Groups Coordinator helping to start new groups and helping to support existing ones is what I'm here for. Two new groups have been set up and are now running since April, namely Poems Aloud and Film Appreciation. There is room for lots more.

So don't be shy. Contact me via the website and I will happily take you through the few easy steps required in setting up a new group. It will be a lot of fun.

Sarah Hawley (Groups Coordinator)

Lincoln u3a Group Leaders

<u>Group</u>	<u>Leader</u>
Art	Margaret Carstairs
Badminton	Rob Dummer
Circle Dancing	Linda Stringer
Creative Writing	Richard Stagg Penelope Hammerton
Film Appreciation	Sue Firth
French Boule	Cynthia Knox
French Conversation	Christine Pritchard
Friday Gardens	Pam Ann
Mah Jong	John Wilson
New Age Curling	Linda Ash
Philosophy	Lindsay Cutts
Poems Aloud	Patrick Bond
Qi Gong	Barbara Bond
Quiz (General Knowledge)	Pat Lucas
Scrabble	Margaret Ford
Spanish Conversation	Mary York
Table Tennis - Monday	Elaine Lewis
Table Tennis - Wednesday	John Wilson
Table Tennis for All - Friday	Maria North
Ten Pin Bowling	Mike Lucas
Wednesday Lunches	Audrey Elliss
Walking Group - Tuesday	Lesley Tapley
If you wish more information about any of these groups, or wish to suggest a new one, please contact the Groups Co-ordinator, Sarah Hawley	

Please note:

The Editor has a new email address, all emails should be sent to the new address, the old one no longer works. If you do send 'stuff' to the old email address, it will disappear into the void.

andrewbradley@rilmags.org

Cruising with SAGA

No, this is not an advertisement, though it could be seen as an endorsement. It is our personal experience only.

Sue and I decided that we would like to do a cruise up into the Baltic Sea, and spent a few online hours trying to find the most attractive deal, based on locations and costs. What we found opened our eyes to the way cruise lines advertise their offerings.

You see an attractive package being offered, with a good itinerary, and set about trying to make a booking. We found that using the phone was the best way as it was a two-way conversation, and you could better identify options and alternatives. For a typical operator, the ad would offer "... from £nnnn.nn". We quickly discovered that this price was a very pared down offering, and as soon as you selected specifics the price grew. Examples were what type of cabin, whether you wanted a sea view and/or balcony, which deck you wanted to be on, what meals package you chose, whether you wanted a drinks package, parking on the dockside, etc. Each option added cost to your ticket, and it quickly became evident that to obtain the parameters you wanted for your cruise, the cost would be higher than expected or planned. The one exception that we found was Saga. Whilst the quoted cost often seemed higher than other operators, you quickly discovered that all of those ancillary items were already included.

So, parking at the port? Not necessary as a car would pick you up from your home and deliver you to the quay – price included. Meal package? Included. Drinks? Included (any premium branded ones, not "local beers" as offered elsewhere). Entertainment? Included. Sports/gym/activities? Included. Different dining options? Included. With five different restaurants to choose from. Excursions? A free one included at each port of call.

Are you getting the picture? A simple illustration might help.

Usually, when you go to a restaurant, you will have a look at the menu, and may decide that the dish that you would really like is a bit expensive, so you go for a cheaper option. There are no prices on a Saga menu! So, you can literally choose to have what you want. And wine with the meal is included, if you want it. Add to all of that a modern, smart ship with multiple lifts between decks, free laundry (including the soap powder!), a good pool and lido, excellent cabins – all with balconies, good room stewards, good waiting & bar staff, and the cost all starts to make sense.

Would we do it again? Yes, finances permitting!

John Wilson.

Superstitions

Do you believe in Ghosts? Are you superstitious?

Well I like to think I keep an open mind about such things but as a Taurean I am pretty down to earth. Years ago I had a friend who had an old cottage in the country. It was so old it had been a home to six Monks of good standing and there was an old tumbled down Church nearby. In fact it had been a Spital in Medieval times, so people who were ill could go there, as Spital was the Medieval term for Hospital.

As I got to know the lady better I was invited for lunch and eventually a supper party and to staying overnight, as I lived the furthest away and I could have a glass or two of wine with my supper.

So I packed my overnight bag and drove off in the excitement of a well cooked meal and an overnight in a pretty cottage in the country.

We were greeted with a glass of our preferred drink and chatted for a while, before before being seated at a lovely country table brimming with food. During the course of the evening we congratulated our hostess on her wonderful food and pretty cottage. She told us it was a Grade 2 listed building dating around 1400, and a Spital to six Monks of good standing and that it was haunted. There were one or two gasps and a few giggles and I thought I would hedge my bets and not say if I believed in ghosts or not. The evening proceeded to dessert and cheese & biscuits and coffee. Everyone was very replete.

And as with all good evenings they must come to an end.

It was a two bedroomed cottage with two separate staircases. My room had a small ensuite a large double bed and looked very cosy indeed. I thanked my friend and we said our good nights and she left me to settle myself in. So I undressed, put my pyjamas on, cleaned my teeth and jumped into the large comfortable bed.

Brrr! I thought there's quite a draft, a big draft in fact, coming from the window, it must be open and so I got out of bed to close it and found when I got there it was not open at all. That's funny I thought as I jumped back into bed shivering and wriggled about a lot until I was getting warmer.

Then I snuggled down for the night. As I lay there quiet and peaceful. I was elbowed again and again, but there was no one there and there was no explanation for it. No party guest left except for myself and my hostess, asleep on the other side of the cottage. Eventually I fell asleep with the light on.

Waking to find the sun shining through my bedroom window. It was about 8.30 and I was washed and dressed and went downstairs to meet my friend who was frying bacon and eggs and making coffee. She asked me if I had a good night and I relayed the two events of the night before.

She laughed and said "I told you the cottage was haunted." "That would have been Rusty, that's what I call my ghost."

"Do you believe in them?"

Penelope Hammerton

Talking Pictures

June saw the first meeting of the newly-formed film appreciation group. My idea was that each group member would take a turn at choosing a film which was available on one of the free streaming platforms for everyone to watch before the monthly meeting. The 'chooser' would do a little research about the film then present it to the group, who would spend a couple of hours in discussion. That was the plan anyway, but as Robbie Burns wrote: *the best-laid schemes o' Mice an' Men gang aft agley*.

As the group convenor I chose the opening film - *The Old Oak*, made a couple of years ago and directed by Ken Loach. It is set in a former mining village in Durham where property is cheap and houses are being bought up to house Syrian refugees. This does not go down well with the locals who congregate in the pub – itself struggling to stay open – to complain about what has happened to them and their community.

Everyone had watched the film and joined in the discussion. *The Old Oak* was Loach's last work before he retired from filmmaking and was generally appreciated as a portrayal of the challenging issues that some communities were facing back in 2016 when the film is set, and are still facing. We did, however, conclude that it was a little too sentimental and the ending a little too upbeat. I feel maybe he wanted to leave the stage on a more positive note than usual.

I thought there would be plenty to talk about – Loach is a very well-known and respected British director who has made many famous films over the years from *Cathy Come Home*, through *Kes*, to his recent hard-hitting films like *I*, *Daniel Blake* – so I was surprised when discussion of the film pretty much petered out after about half an hour. I know that any new group of people coming together takes a while to gel but the talk was much less free-flowing than I had expected. It didn't help that I felt I had to start with an apology about the amount of swearing in the film. It wasn't over the top, given that Loach is a social realist filmmaker, but I forget that not everyone spends as much time as I do at football matches where swearing is pretty much the norm.

That's not to say we all sat there staring into space for the rest of the meeting, in fact the film talk ranged far and wide over films we'd seen and liked, recommendations for things to watch and talk about trips to the cinema. Given the average age of the group, there were also quite a few sentences which started "Do you remember that great film starring so-and-so who used to be married to what's-his-name?" So, to give an added focus to meetings and make sure we have plenty to discuss for the entire two hours, we agreed that in future everyone would come prepared to talk for 10 minutes about a particular film they had enjoyed and would like to recommend to the group.

The film chosen for everyone to watch in preparation for the July meeting was *Tea with Mussolini*, Franco Zeffereilli's boyhood memories of being looked after by a community of elderly British ladies in Florence in the 1930s/40s.

The group's page on the U3a website will be updated each month to let people know the next film to watch, just in case they decide to apply to join the group. And if you feel like watching *The Old Oak* to see what you think, it's still available on BBC iPlayer.

Sue Firth

Change of Address and/or Telephone Number

Name _____ Membership Number _____

New Address _____

_____ Postcode _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

Date _____ Signature _____

Please forward the completed form to the Membership Secretary



MYSTERY COACH TOUR

A Mystery Coach Tour is being arranged by Lincoln u3a for Tuesday 15th September. It will start from Memorial Hall, 317 Newark Road, North Hykeham, Lincoln (LN6 9RY) at 9:30am, returning there at 4:30pm. You can park your car here.

It will visit three places of interest, to give you an introduction to attractions that you may not have been aware of before, and may wish to visit later in your own time.

There will be a lunch stop, where you can purchase refreshments, or you can take a packed lunch with you.

For convenience, the coach has an onboard toilet.

More details will be available at the August Monthly Meeting, and circulated by email.

Put it in your diary now!

Circle Dancing Group

The Circle Dance group continues to meet happily under the instruction of Margaret Doughty who has returned having recovered from her knee op. We have a core group of regular attenders who enjoy the dancing and camaraderie very much. New members are welcome to come for a free taster session and then join if they so wish. Margaret will be away for the August meet and there is uncertainty regarding that date so it might be best for those interested to avoid that session.

We meet at Moorland Park Methodist church on Skellingthorpe Road on the third Wednesday in the month 10am to 11:30am. We look forward to seeing new faces, no experience needed!



For further information please contact the Group Leader via the website or at any Monthly Meeting.

Tuesday Trotters 2026



Group Leader - Lesley Tapley

August 11th	Janet and Keith	Hanworth Country Park - 5.3 miles
August 25th	Elaine Le and Linda	TBA
September 8th	Jon and Christine	Tunman Wood
September 22nd	Lesley	Collingham and Langford
October 13th	John	TBA
October 27th	Elaine Le and Linda	TBA
November 10th	Sarah	TBA
November 24th	Jon and Christine	TBA
December 8th	Xmas Lunch and Bassingham Walk organised by Linda and Elaine LE.	
All walks are 5-6 miles long but there may on occasion be a shorter walk also available starting and finishing at the same place. Lunch is optional and all are most welcome.		
Contact by the u3A website or at the monthly meeting.		

The Picture opposite shows committee member Anita Innes sitting astride the motorbike that the Blood Bikes people brought with them when they gave a very interesting talk at the monthly meeting on 7 July 26.

Also, on page 35, is a certificate acknowledging the money collection taken at the meeting. A fabulous amount of £242.85!

Mah Jong Group – Open Session!

We have often been asked by members, “What is Mah Jong?” or “How do you play?”. So, for all of you inquisitives, we have decided to hold an open free session where you can get a feel for the game we love.

We will be pleased to show you the basics of the game, demonstrate a few hands and, if you wish, get you to try your hand at a game.



This will be held at our regular meeting place, Canwick Village Hall (LN4 2RW), where there is plenty of parking, between 2:30pm and 4:00pm on Thursday 3rd September. There is plenty of parking space there.

This is a free event, and refreshments will be available. If you want to know more, or would like to attend, please contact the Group Leader John Wilson at jwtransmit@gmail.com or 01522 212028.

Components of the game:

- ✓ Circles, Bamboo, Characters;
- ✓ Dragons and Winds;
- ✓ Seasons and Flowers;



Managing my first kitten experience.

My wife, Anita and I got together about 13 years ago and married 10 years ago. I inherited two lovely mature Burmese cats, Cleo and Simba, who lived happily with us until they died, Cleo in 2019 and Simba in 2025. Having made the decision to have another Burmese we contacted a local breeder to see what might be available and when. To our surprise a litter of six had just been born and we went to see them when they were about three weeks old. Some of the litter were already promised to other breeders and customers in the UK and Europe, but we had the choice of two cream males.

I remember being terrified in a small room at the breeder's house with all six kittens running around and doing my very best not to trample on any of them! They were all not much bigger than a mouse. Over the next couple of months, we made weekly visits to them and the breeder. In particular, we went to check on the progress of one of the cream males, "number 59", (last digits of his microchip) who had formed a strong bond with us, especially Anita. He had taken to snuggling into her neck the minute we arrived and he quickly became "the one". Once we had agreed to purchase him and abide some sensible rules and conditions applicable to a show winning pedigree breed, we finally got to give him a name. Being a pedigree cat we agreed with the breeder that his official name would be Lord Tennyson, and then settled on our own name for him. Thus "Milo" was soon to become a member of our family.



On 4 July 2025 we went along to collect Milo and bring him home for the first time. This was all new to me and a distant memory for my wife. So, what exactly do you do with a 4-month-old kitten weighing in at just over 1kg, to get him acclimatised to his new home? And so began a steep learning curve, especially for me, and if I look a bit terrified in the photo, I was! The first thing to accept is that you are now living in the kitten's home and he will dictate what he wants and what you can and cannot do. Of course we had lots of play equipment, some old and some new. Milo was interested in some of them but soon decided that climbing up the curtains was far more exciting and brought on a stronger reaction from us. Milo became Milo-Nooooo! very quickly.



Slowly but surely our house began to change. Anything that could be knocked over and broken had to be re-sited. Cables at the back of the TV and audio equipment were, and still are, a fascination for Milo. Any power cables had to be protected in plastic sheaths to keep him safe. As Milo quickly grew, he was able to leap higher, and we had to move more stuff out of harm's way. Like all cats Milo loves to sleep and I excelled in helping him with that! Milo is house cat and has access to some rooms and not others. Of course, it is the rooms that we do not allow him into that are of

most interest!

My favourite chair quickly became Milo's chair which I am occasionally allowed to occupy. Despite having three beds of his own he usually



prefers to sleep in my, sorry his, chair. His second trip to the vet to be neutered went OK, although he did not leap about so much for a few days!

Accidents will happen and we had a scare when Milo slithered off some curtains and fell backwards trapping his leg behind a radiator pipe. I managed to release him and a quick trip to the vet revealed no lasting damage. I then had the job of fitting some brackets behind all the radiators, to prevent any possible recurrence.



Of course, by the time Christmas came along we had to decide what to do about a tree and decorations. I managed to securely clamp an artificial LED tree to a small table, and we skipped most other decorations. Despite numerous attempts to climb the tree, it survived although we were kept well exercised in retrieving him from the lower branches! Christmas presents were a fascination for Milo, and he helped to unwrap them all with his increasingly sharp claws.

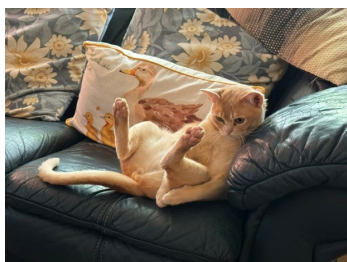
We have weighed Milo every week since he joined our family and for the first year he made steady progress. However, at about one year old he came off kitten food and started on adult food.

Since then, his weight gain has

risen dramatically, and he is now just under 6kg and on a bit of a diet. Making the transition from kitten food to adult food was quite challenging. Cats either have wet food, dry food (biscuits) or a combination of both. We tried him on a whole variety of both wet and dry food until he finally settled on just dry biscuits from a certain fairly expensive supplier.



This is Milo's idea of exercises:



Milo is now 15 months old. We have all survived OK, although there were several times when I questioned our sanity in taking on a new kitten. He is now a fully fledged member of the family, and we love him to bits. Although now considered an adult, he is still full of mischief. Especially when he wants some attention and thinks that the TV program you are trying to watch is far less important than playtime! Our grandchildren also love to play with him as well. They all get on remarkably well and he will even "help" with some craft work at the table. If you ever consider having a kitten yourself, be prepared for a lot of upheaval and change. But, be assured, the joy they can bring to the family is well worth the effort.

Elaine Parker wrote in about "Things I've done recently."

Been to London on 8th July to see Maureen Lipman in *Allegra*. A fabulous show with only four in the cast. Very funny and Maureen sang several songs. Highly recommended. Then in evening saw Sam Ryder in *Jesus Christ Superstar* at the Palladium. Absolutely loved it. Sam was amazing and Tyrone Huntley was Judas, an excellent choice. Again highly recommended.

Penny Chafik writes:

I have enclosed some nice pictures of my grandchildren at Wyndam Park, Grantham. I thought it might give folks an idea for a day out with children/grandchildren over the summer holidays.

The park has free parking, a very nice cafe and there are ice creams to buy. There is a Splash Park, access to the river, play equipment, a trim trail and walks. There are good toilet facilities and also other Activities at the centre.

Our Grandchildren loved it. They were very determined to catch a fish!



U3A Tea And Coffee Rota 2026

Refreshment Hostess - Linda Ash.



Volunteers are always needed to help with serving tea and coffee, between 9am - 10am at the monthly meetings.

August 4th	Pat Lucas, Mike Lucas, Sarah Hawley, Lindsay Cutts
September 1st	Jude White, Margaret Mashman ?, Cathy Ball, Elaine Lewis
October 6th	Lesley Tapley, Chris Axford, Barry Stonehouse, Sally Elkington



A Big Thank You to all our Volunteers for their help with the Teas



and Coffees sessions at our Monthly Meetings, as you can see more volunteers are needed. If you feel you can help, then please let Linda Ash know via the website, which date(s) you can help with. Alternatively, put your name in the book at any of the Monthly Meetings.

Lots of volunteers. Thank you all. Any offers to fill the rota for November and December would be greatly appreciated. Just one hour of your time, if you are able, would make all the difference. Thank you to everyone who helps.

"I went to the doctor's. I said, 'I've got a problem with the hearing in one of my ears.' He said, 'Are you sure?' I said, 'Yes, I'm definite.'"

Canasta

Peter Caborn is new to the area and keen to start a Canasta group. He plays the variant "Samba Canasta" which is played with three decks! It is best played with two teams of two players or two teams of three players. It can be played by three or five players playing individually but this is less fun than playing in teams.

The rules at first appear to be quite complicated but in Peter's experience new players only need to play a couple of hands to get the basics and can then be guided a little by more experienced players.

One fundamental rule which some new players find a challenge is that it is forbidden to communicate with other players about what cards they have or need, or how they or another player should play. It is therefore like Bridge in that respect.

I hope Peter finds some fellow Canasta players keen to help him start this new group. He is happy for those interested to contact him directly. His phone number is:- 07593 943 657

Sarah Hawley (Groups Coordinator)

	WEEK ONE		WEEK TWO	
	AM	PM	AM	PM
MONDAY	Quiz 10am-12pm	Art 2pm-4pm Table Tennis 2pm-4pm	Ten Pin Bowling 9.45 for 10am start	Art 2pm-4pm Table Tennis 2pm-4pm
TUESDAY	General Meeting 9.30am-12pm		Tuesday Trotters 9.45am for 10am Poems Out Loud 10.30am-12.30pm	
WEDNESDAY	French Boule 10am-11.30am 5th March until October	Table Tennis 2pm-4pm	French Boule 10am-11.30am 5th March until October	Table Tennis 2pm-4pm
THURSDAY		Mah-Jong 2.30pm-4.30pm Spanish Conversation 2pm-4pm	New Age Kurling 10.30am-12.30pm	Creative Writing 1pm-3pm for winter 2pm-4pm for summer French Conversation 2pm-3.30pm Spanish Conversation 2pm-4pm
FRIDAY	Table Tennis for All 10am-11am	Badminton 1.30pm-3.30pm	Friday Gardens 10.30am Qi Gong 10am-10.45am	Badminton 1.30pm-3.30pm

Lincoln U3A Ten Pin Bowling Group - News

9.45 for 10am start. A session costs £6.60 person which includes shoe hire if needed. Drinks are extra.

We now have between 18 and 22 regular players. The current list has 30 names on it but thankfully everyone doesn't come at once. We can normally accommodate a maximum of 24 players per session so if you would like to try your hand. Contact the Group Leader via the website or at any Monthly Meeting.

	WEEK THREE		WEEK FOUR	
	AM	PM	AM	PM
MONDAY	Ten Pin Bowling 9.45am for 10am start	Art 2pm-4pm Table Tennis 2pm-4pm Scrabble 2pm-4pm	Ten Pin Bowling 9.45 for 10am start Philosophy 10am-11.30am	Art 2pm-4pm Table Tennis 2pm-4pm
TUESDAY			Tuesday Trotters 9.45am for 10am	
WEDNESDAY	French Boule 10am-11.30am 5th March until October Circle Dancing 10am-11.30am	Wednesday Lunches 12pm for 12.30pm Table Tennis 2pm-4pm Film Appreciation 2.30pm-4.30pm	French Boule 10am-11.30am 5th March until October	Table Tennis 2pm-4pm
THURSDAY		Mah-Jong 2.30pm-4.30pm Spanish Conversation 2pm-4pm	New Age Kurling 10.30am-12.30pm	French Conversation 2pm-3.30pm Spanish Conversation 2pm-4pm
FRIDAY	Table Tennis for All 10am-11am	Badminton 1.30pm-3.30pm	Qi Gong 10am-10.45am	Badminton 1.30pm-3.30pm

French Boule

The venue is Boultham Park, where it's free to play. Weather permitting, from 10am until 11.30am. It is to be held weekly until October.

If this group interests you, contact the Group Leader via the website or at any Monthly Meeting.

The Gates of Hell

Whilst religious fanatics may argue otherwise, the Gates of Hell in fact lie deep in the Turkmenistan desert, many miles from its capital, Ashgabat. The journey to visit this extraordinary spectacle was, in itself, indeed “hellish”. With just two exceptions the rural roads in Turkmenistan are the worst I have ever experienced anywhere. This particular road was the “the great north road” of the country, linking Turkmenistan with neighbouring Uzbekistan, and the major route for all imported fresh foods.

Like the fen roads in the south of our county which are built on silt and shift constantly, Turkmenistan’s roads are built on sand. Not a good foundation! According to our guide the Government can afford to make repairs but sees no point in doing so. We think our potholes are bad, but we have nothing on theirs. Averaging less than 30 miles per hour for the first four hours the journey was tortuous, and oh so hot. But worse was to come... as we left the “main road” and ventured into eh desert itself for two more hours (another 50 miles). Here the sand is soft, firmer than dunes but equally undulating. Everywhere is peppered with thorn bushes.

Happily, camels thrive on these particular bushes, so still supporting the age-old nomadic lifestyle of indigenous Turkmen (much to the chagrin of the ruling ethnic Russian elite). Apparently camel meat is “delicious. (I remain to be convinced!)

How our drivers found their way to the Gates of Hell was a total mystery. There were tracks in the desert, but so many that it seemed impossible to know which ones to follow. Still, happily they did know.

The first sighting of the Gates of Hell (mundanely the Dervaza gas crater) is confusing. It is bright, and large and can be seen for miles but we didn’t seem to get any closer, until, almost suddenly, we were upon it! It is huge, over 200 feet wide and over 100 feet deep (if you dare approach close enough to try to see the bottom... I didn’t!).

The heat, of course, is the most over-whelming sensation! The ambient temperature of the desert had, by now, dropped to about 40 degrees C...the heat coming from the crater reminded me of opening a fan over set at 205 degrees...only much, much hotter!

Turkmenistan holds the world’s second largest gas reserves. In the 1970s Soviet prospectors were searching for even more and discovered the Dervaza crater when it collapsed under their drilling. Fearing an escape of noxious gases they decided to “burn off” the gas, which burning continues to this day.

A night under canvas within sight still of the hellish fires preceded a return journey the way we had come. I had elected to sleep in a one-man tent, for fear of keeping everyone else awake in a shared yurt, with my pneumatic drill-like snoring! I

cont bottom of page 27

New Member Experience

Eleven pounds doesn't go very far these days. However, the prospect of an air-conditioned hall, a cup of tea and a biscuit and the promise of a good presentation on a particularly hot morning in July seemed good value to me as I handed over my first half-year subscription to the U3A.

I'd been meaning to join for a while and finally found a suitable date to attend a taster event and a meeting. My first experience was with the Tuesday Trotters, again on a particularly hot Tuesday morning! Lesley took me under her wing and I enjoyed a good 5-6 mile hike in the Wragby area followed by a very welcome drink and salad at the Adam & Eve. A great start!

It was good to receive a warm welcome by the committee at my first meeting and also to be offered "a buddy" by Anita. As it happened, I saw three familiar faces and also fell into conversation with another newbie so it was an easy integration. I'm hoping to re-jig my usual schedule so that I can try some of the interesting activities on offer - particularly the language conversation sessions. A positive experience! Looking forward to chatting to more members at the next meeting.

Sheren Roche

Social Events

For some time, Lincoln u3a had very few social events/trips on offer, but now that we have opened that door, and sought your many suggestions as to other things we can do or places we can go, the Social Secretary, Andy Briggs, is in need of assistance to get the programme sorted and arrangements made.

Could you be one of those helpers?

Please contact Andy by email on **briggsandrew272@gmail.com** for further details, or to see what help you can offer.

There are few things more satisfying than seeing an event that you have organised come about, and being enjoyed by our members.

Thanks, in anticipation.

Jokes:

My wife and I were happy for twenty years; then we met.

I haven't talked to my wife for three weeks. I didn't dare interrupt her.

I recently decided to sell my vacuum cleaner, it was only gathering dust.



Summer Days

WORDSEARCH

L V S W I M M I N G P O O L F U C A M T
Y E N D E C K C H A I R H E A T W A V E
A S M E M R D Q I N C G E D F S W L I M
X D S O V I B O T L N V X M C V N L A P
G Z U S N D C E V I I V H O M B D E R E
U O N R G A N D L Y C B R N Z U R J Y R
S L S I D S D Z E C H C M Q U C S T R A
Z S C C E N Z E K U H G D A E K A W R T
Z H R H Y I G C N I A N H C A E B E Y U
H E E R S A A A N T T I I P W T T E Q R
N A E R W P I G N I F R U S J S D L E E
T T N R E T E M O M R E H T I A U E V S
A S W C V I D B M U P T C L H N B C L P
N T I S P Z E M I N H L B S J D A T H D
N R N O I T A R D Y H E D J L S K R G Q
I O S U N B U R N Q O W H O W P K I D U
N K F L I P F L O P S S C Q M A N C H L
G E P B K D E S C A C H F A K D L F E H
B L A A I R C O N D I T I O N E R A M V

Do you remember those Lazy Hazy Days of Summer?



After all this lovely hot weather we've had recently, I thought a Word-search based on 'Summer Words' would be a good one. You have 30

words in the list all to do with long hot summer days, relaxing by the pool, or maybe having a dip in the water at the Seaside.

The usual up/down, left/right and diagonal.
Happy Days! Happy Searches!



Solution on page 34.

Air Conditioner

Beach

Bikini

Blister

Buckets and Spades

Cold Beer

Deck Chair

Dehydration

Electric Fan

Flip Flops

Heatstroke

Heatwave

Ice Cream

Ice Pack

Intense Heat

Lemonade



Picnic

Scorching

Shade

Sizzling

Summer

Sunburn

Sunscreen

Surfing

Sweat

Sweltering

Swimming Pool

Tanning

Temperature

Thermometer

Umbrella

Water

cont from page 24

See colour picture on back page.

realised, however, that by sleeping in a tent I was able to keep everyone awake not just those in the same yurt.

On the way back, our drivers seemed less careful, and not at all concerned to keep one another in sight, as they had been on the outward journey. Once we took a wrong track. My fellow passengers and I remained oblivious until our driver stopped his car, muttered what I took to be expletives in his native tongue, turned round and then retraced our steps for the next 20 minutes.

Hour upon hour of bumps and rolling and jerks returned us eventually, and gratefully, to our Soviet-era hotel, opposite the State circus in the Marble City.

Dennis Bambridge

Experimental Web Log (Blog) (1) Displacements.



It started with a book. That was how the first one began. How a book I had known since childhood found its way into my hands twenty-five years after the death of my father. Maybe not a particularly outstanding one and the blue box had faded in years of tropical sunshine. The contents still reeked of lost and forgotten smokers that constituted the only common space associated with leisure on the ships my father and I had known. The book itself was immaculate. From out of the back, unbidden, fell a photograph when I flipped the pages and the gold blocking lit up as the late afternoon sun reminded me of Golden Orioles that flashed in the warm tropic afternoon air. As I remarked, that was the point at which I decided to tell that story. When that picture flew like a zoetrope and

dropped onto the faded carpet at the top of the house I would sell three years later, I knew my father did not lie when he told me tiny snatches of what happened. I filled in the detail, pasting my own experience onto the pages, holding his narrative together in what I hoped would be a story worth reading.

As Aristotle or anyone else might ask, what then? What was before and what came after? I had addressed the 'before' with a series of appendices on the historical background of the story for the benefit of the reader. The how and why behind a dreadful conflict which, as I now ruefully remark, was just part two of something much larger. Part one finished in 1918. What about the 'after'? That idea gained traction in my mind as I spoke to a couple of people, anxious to know if there would be 'a sequel'. Well, if Star Wars could do it, then why not? I already had the characters. At that point I was only interested in two. Jim MacAndrew, the straight-talking Glaswegian Second Engineer from the Tankship, and a young Japanese soldier (I call him Kazuo) who, drafted into the army as a teenager, sees the worst of human behaviour when he is sent to Singapore after the infamous capitulation in the February of 1942. These two are going home. One, the Glaswegian, is apprehensive. He has been away from home for over two years. Our young Japanese fellow has not seen Japan for a little less than two and a half. He was not in the invading army. He was later transported in a freighter that had been used for livestock. Kazuo and the Glaswegian never meet but their sons, born into curious and turbulent times, will. By curious turns their fates will be spun as the Japanese and the Glaswegian experience the awkward and tenuous peace that rose in their homelands and the Far East where they were mixed up in a war that nobody wanted to remember and their children will be drawn together in a moment neither will forget. As they grow up they watch as one nation declines and the other rises. They also watch as the two national cultures from which they come resume the associations they made before WW (part)1 and learn how to live with each other.

David McNeil

1976 - that's 50 years ago!

TV: Paddington, Rentaghost, Ripping Yarns, Open All Hours, Starsky & Hutch, George and Mildred, The Muppet Show, I Claudius, The Bionic Woman, Happy Days.

Pat Phoenix returned to the role of Elsie Tanner after an absence of three years and Margot Bryant made her last appearance as Minnie Caldwell on Coronation Street.

Died: Sid James from a heart attack, and Alastair Sim due to cancer.

Born: Emma Bunton, Martine McCutcheon, Benedict Cumberbatch, Anna Friel.

Brotherhood of Man win the Eurovision Song Contest for the UK with the song "Save Your Kisses For Me". It goes on to be the biggest-selling Eurovision winner ever.

It Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time.

Selina Calder swung her shapely legs out of her super king bed, pulled the chintz curtains firmly aside and gazed out into the autumn sun rising horizontally over her orderly and maintained garden. Brian, her husband of some thirty years, continued to snore in quiet spasms beside her.

"No time to waste", she considered, "today was the day." Weeks of work, planning and consideration had culminated in the events of this particular day. Selina had long held ambitions to be noticed and remembered in her small seaside town. She had captained the ladies golf team, become a local town councillor and held the post of WI President for five years in total. She wanted greater recognition above these esteemed posts, and the events of today, and specifically, the evening, would mark the culmination of her unique aspirations.

She showered, and dressed in her chosen outfit and accessories, a well cut shift dress and jacket, with handbag and low heeled court shoes. A pearl necklace, and diamante wristwatch completed the simple but elegant look.

"After all, less is more."

"I am out for the day now" she whispered to Brian as she placed his cup of sweet tea on the bedside cabinet.

"I am sure the day will work to perfection darling," muttered Brian, in total ignorance of the great day's event, as he settled down for a leisurely waking up period.

Selina parked her white Mercedes sports car in the town's pavilion car park. This would serve her needs for the day and evening. She was the proprietor of three fashion shops in the small town; the nearest to the car park was a modestly priced outlet aimed at the 20 to 30 age group. It displayed a range of fashion categories, with shoes, bags and jewellery to compliment. She found a rather anxious woman hanging different garments on a rail, and a floor covered with shoes and bags.

"How are you today Esmie, all ready for the big event? Ensure the shoes are all a size 6 and the clothing a size 14 please. Margo's husband will arrive at 4pm with his van. You must be ready, and all the garments and accessories protected or boxed."

"But of course, it will all be ready. I am looking forward to this."

"Ah, excellent," and with that, Selina swept out, and walked to her next location.

This fashion shop aimed its market at the mature, plump and older section of townswomen, of which there were many. Smart roomy comfortable florals, and jackets or coats to upgrade the attire. Smart trousers were also available for

those towns folk who preferred to cover up their fat ankles.

"Good morning Pat. Lovely day for it. Have you packed the items we agreed on? I think these will have a wider appeal, and we must provide interest for our older audience. They must be size 18, and the shoes with a wider fitting, but a small heel. I will see you this evening." And with that, Selina hastened on to her third and final venue.

She arrived at her favourite and most exclusive shop, 'Elan.' Garments were sourced from Europe, and thus not commonplace in the town. The aim was exclusivity, and quality. Her saleswomen were carefully selected and trained. Prices were high, purchaser advice individual, diplomatic and timely, and the saleswomen exuded charm and compliments. Customers were encouraged to try garments on, and in consequence rarely exited without making a purchase, providing their credit cards could bear the burden.

"Now ladies, I have visited our two sister shops, and they are fully organised. Please reassure me, that is the case for Elan. Overall we have three professional models, and the host for us is one Sylvia Trump. I have not met this lady but she comes highly recommended by my sister Celia. She was a professional broadcaster. She should have no difficulties with our clearly printed cards detailing the different outfits, that our models will wear. I have total confidence that our well laid plans and organisation will steer us through a very successful evening." At this point in the proceedings, Selena relaxed. "Here's to an enjoyable and memorable evening ladies, that will hopefully bear fruits for our shops."

It was Brenda who suggested the evening. "Look ladies, we have had a few challenging months, how about an evening at a fashion show? It's at the Pavilion on a Friday. I can easily go into one of the three shops and purchase tickets. It will be a bit of a team building evening, we barely have time to speak to each other these days." And so it was that six community workers arrived at the Pavilion for an evening of relaxation and fashion.

They entered the pavilion foyer to see a Vauxhall car on display, a new model at that, with attendant salesmen and free brochures. "Well, that's a first for this place," declared Kate, "They will do anything these days to bring in a bit of money, but it isn't really appropriate for a theatre."

"Ah, don't forget this venue was originally much more than a theatre. It was intended to be a wider resource with sports and art and suchlike", retorted Brenda, now well versed in the town's social history. "Let's go grab some seats, so we don't end up in the back row."

"Mmm, that's a bit strange," said Rita, never known to miss a trick. "I didn't know the local men were so keen on women's fashions." There around them were installed a sea of men, mostly in base ball caps.

And so the evening began. The curtains opened to reveal another Vauxhall new model car, and the car sales manager launched into a hard sell, with sweeteners of discounts, new technology, and a range of new colours.

The interval eventually dawned, and there was a stampede of baseball hats to the bar, and subsequent late returners for the second half of the evening.

"Thank God. It's time for our bit now", declared a frustrated Brenda. "If I'd known all this malarkey was on for the first half, I don't think I would have bothered to come. Let's chill, and plan our possible purchasing assault."

And so it began. The host Sylvia appeared first, clutching a stack of paper, cards, but a little unsteady on her heels. She introduced the general theme of the evening, once she had mastered how to manage the microphone, i.e. make sure one speaks into the bulb at mouth level. This accomplished to some degree, Selina backstage communicated to a distant technician for the smoke machine be switched on. The first model appeared looking confident and elegant, but Sylvia informed the poised audience that she could not read the cards as her spectacles were in her handbag. Selina appeared, rather embarrassed with the said article and meanwhile, the smoke machine continued.

Sylvia appeared to muddle her way through the outfit details. The second model appeared, and Sylvia related details of an outfit that was clearly not the one on display.

There was a mumble from the audience.

Selina reappeared and thrust the correct details in front of Sylvia and scuttled out quickly.

"I can't read it with this smoke", came a statement from Sylvia front of stage, that sounded a little slurred, and delivered from wobbly heels.

The third model appeared, and by this time in the proceedings could hardly see her way from left to stage right. She nevertheless, strutted her stuff, delivered a few twirls, and exited. The audience could neither see her clearly, nor were in receipt of a description of her attire.

Smoke continued to billow, and now entered the auditorium. There were a few giggles, from an audience trying to behave, given the unfolding disaster onstage.

And so it progressed, more inappropriate comments by the host, who sounded increasingly intoxicated, a flow of models in outfits barely discernable, and a completely mismatched or absent dialogue.

The audience were in fits of laughter. Brenda declared it hilarious and the team while trying to restrain themselves, had tears rolling down their cheeks. Eventually, Sylvia was led off stage by a quietly furious but controlled Selina, and the remaining outfits briefly shown without explanations of cost and details, while raucous laughter accompanied them.

Finally it came to an end.

"Well, that's the funniest thing I've seen in years smiled Kate. What a hoot. Much funnier than anything I've seen on TV for years. Well done Brenda for getting the tickets. It's done us all good."

Selina returned home at midnight. Her aspirations in ruins. She was a laughing stock. An evening that would be a long term memory for the audience.

"Good day dear?", muttered Brian raising his eyes briefly from the golf on the large TV.

"Absolutely not," spat Selina, "It all seemed a good idea at the time. A large gin and tonic please!".

Maria Crees
Creative Writing Group

u3a Friday Gardens

I moved to Lincoln mid-January during the seemingly never ending spell of constant rain. The only two people I knew here were my daughter and her husband, and whilst that was okay at the time because I was surrounded by boxes which need sorting, I wanted the opportunity to get out, meet people and integrate socially.

When a copy of Lindum Colonia came through my letterbox it provided the means to do this when I saw the details of the u3a Friday Gardens Group advertised.

I have now enjoyed two garden/lunch visits and look forward to the next one. Everyone was so welcoming and friendly. I particularly enjoyed the visit to The Poplars, Newark; a mix of cottage and Mediterranean planting which worked well. The highlight was the rare Wollemi Pine - well worth seeing.

This group is an enjoyable way of getting out in the fresh air, visiting gardens and then lunch with friends.

Eileen

A Surprise

I can't remember exactly how old I was, but I had started school because it was the summer holidays. I suppose I must have been six or seven. Mum and Dad had organised for my older brother and me to spend a week at each of our grandparents, separately, apparently we were too much to handle when we were together. I went to my paternal grandmother's house the first week. A big old Victorian terrace with bay windows and high ceilings in Liverpool. I don't remember much about it but at the end of the week we swapped over and I went to stay with my Mum's parents in Lancashire. Grandad was a prison officer so my maternal grandparents lived in prison officers' housing. It was bright, clean and a much more welcoming house than my other grandmother's. I found out later that my brother had been too frightened to stay and had had to be taken back home.

Grandad went to work, so I spent the week with Grandma, helping with the chores, shopping and baking. Grandma was the most wonderful cook and she baked a lemon meringue pie especially as she knew it was my favourite.

On one of the days my Auntie Margo, my Mum's younger sister, came to visit. She brought my cousins with her, two little girls, born just a year apart, who were still both babies. I was delighted to see them and loved playing with them. I was particularly taken with a teddy bear that they'd brought with them. I didn't have a special teddy at home and for some reason this teddy seemed to speak to me.

The next week, back home again, I was playing in my bedroom when the doorbell rang. I heard Mum calling me so I ran downstairs to see what she wanted. The front door was open and on the doorstep was a shoebox tied up with string and addressed to me. I couldn't wait to see what was inside. I picked up the box, untied the string, and removed the lid. To my amazement a teddy, identical to the one I'd fallen in love with at my Grandma's, was looking back up at me. I shrieked with delight. I held the bear close to me and a bond was formed that day which remains unbroken sixty years on.

The teddy had a label on the inside of her right leg which read...

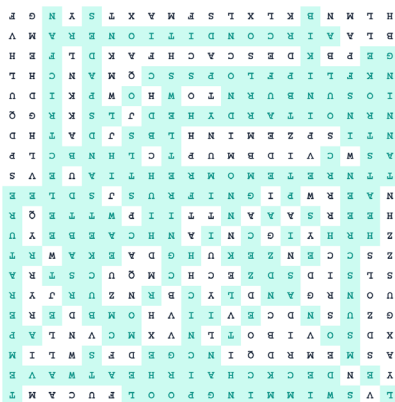
Wendy Boston

Made in England

Of course I had no idea that Wendy Boston was the name of the toy manufacturer and assumed it was the teddy bear's name. From that day on she was known as Wendy and became a member of the family, going on every holiday at home and abroad. She has seen me through good and bad times, been my solace when I've cried, my confidant and most faithful companion.

She is now an old lady, more thready bear than teddy bear, but still very much loved. The best surprises really do come in small packages.

Debbie Lloyd, Creative Writing Group





Two pictures sent in by Sarah Hawley, taken while out walking near Harby. She says, "I didn't even know they hunted during the day!" I thought, neither did I, so I went looking for some information.

Apparently, some owls do hunt during the day. Species like the Northern Hawk Owl and Burrowing Owl are primarily active in daylight, while others may occasionally hunt during the day if food is scarce. The Short-eared Owl and Snowy Owl hunt night or day.

Owls may hunt during the day for several reasons. Food Availability: If their usual prey is scarce at night. Less Competition: from other predators during daylight hours. Adapting to Environment: Like the Snowy Owl, long daylight hours, as in the Arctic.



The Gates of Hell



Picture submitted by Dennis Bambridge. It accompanies his article starting on page 24.

From the Editor:

My inbox is at **andrewbradley@railmags.org**

Note the new email address!

All copy for publication should ideally be in a **plain text** document attached to an email, or simply in the body of an email. Make sure you put U3A in the subject line. Pictures should be **attached** to an email. If you must send copy as a written document, please write legibly, preferably double-spaced.



If you send any pictures, please send them as they are. That is, in colour (if they are colour photos), not cropped, no captions on them, and not resized. It's a big in-box, big pictures are good!

Copy for the November 2026 issue should be with me no later than 13 October 2026, but you don't have to wait till the deadline! This is your Magazine, I only do the editing.

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